

Training: 1997 Program Accomplishments

The Small Underserved Communities Team manages outreach programs that offer various educational and hands-on training opportunities for people living in small communities or for owners or operators of small wastewater systems. Programs focus on a variety of operator training, curricula development, outreach workshops and conferences, and peer matching activities. FY 1997 program accomplishments are highlighted below.

Operator Training Program. By authority of Section 104(g)(1) of the CWA, EPA initiated the Operator Training program to provide hands-on technical assistance and operator training to address noncompliance problems at small publicly owned treatment works (POTWs). The program's goal is to optimize POTW performance by identifying design, administrative, maintenance, and operational performance limiting factors and determining feasible solutions. To date, more than 6,000 POTWs have received onsite assistance, with 80 percent reaching compliance or showing improved performance. Following are FY 1997 program accomplishments:

- ▶ **EPA regional offices allocated more than \$1.79 million to 48 states to continue onsite technical assistance for operators across the country.**
- ▶ **EPA developed a survey to determine the effectiveness of the Section 104(g)(1) onsite assistance program. Survey questions were screened by operators at local wastewater treatment facilities to ensure their appropriateness. A report, to be distributed in 1998, will summarize results of the national survey.**
- ▶ **Approximately 150 technical assistance providers attended the annual National Operator Training Conference.**

National Environmental Training Center for Small Communities (NETCSC). Established in 1991, NETCSC is located at West Virginia University in Morgantown, West Virginia. It serves



as a national training and education center for environmental trainers nationwide to improve the quality of wastewater, drinking water, and solid waste services in communities with fewer than 10,000 people. NETCSC develops new training curricula, redesigns existing curricula, and—in partnership with other organizations—presents training courses around the country to help small communities meet federal and state environmental requirements. NETCSC supports a toll-free

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technical information resource center that maintains several electronic databases and a materials repository for environmental trainers. The center publishes a quarterly newsletter and a resource catalog and maintains a website. The website is located at http://www.estd.wvu.edu/netc/netcsc_homepage.html.

Highlights of FY 1997 accomplishments for NETCSC include:

- ▶ ***Development and Delivery.*** NETCSC produced an omnibus training course that consists of four stand-alone courses in troubleshooting wastewater systems for trainers who work with small communities. NETCSC conducted 13 training sessions with 26 co-sponsors, reaching nearly 400 participants in 6 EPA regions. It also began an effort to incorporate NETCSC curricula into state certification programs and served as a regional downlink site for three satellite video conferences.
- ▶ ***Training Assistance.*** NETCSC training offerings earned a 93.5-percent customer satisfaction rating from course participants. NETCSC provided training information or products to nearly 400 environmental professionals and expanded information in its databases on training activities, materials, and organizations. Entries in the trainers database increased by nearly 50 percent. NETCSC displayed materials at 14 national and 18 state conferences and negotiated three formal cooperative agreements with two national organizations and one state organization to share and distribute training information.
- ▶ ***Promotions and Outreach.*** NETCSC's website logged 865 hits in its first year with a growing monthly volume exceeding 175 hits. Four updates to the website were completed, including eight links. NETCSC distributed 17 news releases to 1,006 sources, and NETCSC-related stories appeared in 22 different national, regional, and state publications.
- ▶ ***Publications.*** NETCSC published and distributed four issues of *E-train*—a free quarterly training newsletter—to 6,300 subscribers. It also published and distributed a training resource catalog and an evaluation resource package for environmental trainers.